

# The Pelham Affair by Louis Tracy.

**SYNOPSIS.**  
 Captain Arthur Pelham, arriving in London from Bombay, India, after several days' absence, is met by a railway porter of his strong resemblance to Sir Arthur, who he says was killed in France.  
 Pelham declares that his cousin is very much alive.  
 Jenkins, the porter, tells of words he heard the supposed dying man repeat and declares that these names have been seen signed on personal items in the "Agony Column" of a London newspaper.  
 After going to a hotel, Captain Pelham decides to join in the fun and writes a personal address to "Matador and Vaquero" who had signed the one which drew his attention. He warns "Bull" that "Bull" is after them.  
 Scotland Yard will know of this in the morning," remarks one of the clerks in the morning office.  
 On a midnight walk Pelham walks through the streets of the family manor, and immediately is set upon by another intruder. A policeman catches him but allows his escape to escape.

(Continued From Yesterday.)  
 CHAPTER II.  
 "Bull" Secures Replies.  
 Pelham's blue serge suit had become a whitish grey in parts during those few seconds' rolling in the dust, so he halted before the party had gone many yards. The policeman grabbed his arm immediately.  
 "I suppose you will soon pass through a crowded street," he explained, in the bored way which his captor well knew was typical of the young army man. "I'll get you the knicker some British soil off my clothes, and then fill my pipe. Do you object?"  
 "Well, no," said the perplexed constable.  
 Pelham took off his coat, and brushed it with his hand. In doing so the automatic pistol he had taken from his unknown assailant, made its presence felt. As he stooped to dust his trousers he smiled. When he had made himself somewhat more presentable, or less noticeable at night, he stepped out again.  
 "It might be a useful wrinkle on some future occasion," he said to the policeman, "but I have done a hundred yards in ten seconds, and I hold the regimental record for the quarter-mile."  
 "Oh, that's all right, sir. I'm sorry I collared you again. I know a gentleman when I see one. It was just a piece of bad luck that you happened to be the top dog when I turned up."  
 Pelham took the point instantly.  
 "Don't you go and say that to any fool of an inspector," he advised. "You could not possibly distinguish between one man and the other. You were watching from the lodge, I take it?"  
 "—yes."  
 "Where did the blighter come from who attacked me?"  
 "He must have dodged up behind the trees. I was lookin' at you crossin' the road."  
 "Were you told off to guard Sir Arthur Pelham's house?"  
 The policeman cleared his throat with a slight cough, sure sign of judicial reserve.  
 "Excuse me, sir, but praps we'd better leave things till you see the inspector."  
 "Quite right. I merely asked because I am Sir Arthur's cousin."  
 "My God!" groaned the lodge-keeper.  
 Pelham laughed. "Why these repeated appeals to Providence, friend?" he inquired.  
 "I twigged the likeness straight off, sir. 'That's the unexpected reply."  
 "That's odd! That's remarkably odd! We Pelhams must be a persistent type."  
 "Is your name Pelham?" put in the constable.  
 "Yes, and another Arthur at that."  
 "Well, this is a rum go, an' no mistake."  
 Pelham was amused by the fact that the Victoria porter had found the situation equally "rum."  
 "Is there any reason why you should not tell me—" he began, but the policeman reiterated his counsel that the affair should be left to the inspector, while the other man simply gave vent to a series of deep-drawn sighs.  
 The inspector proved to be a quite intelligent person. He eyed the suspect with a "tell-me-truth-or-you'll-get-six-months" expression at first; but the constable's story was candid. "Then you make no charge?" was his superior's opening comment. A man in plain clothes, seated at the other end of the room, took no part in the proceedings, being absorbed in an evening newspaper.  
 "No, sir, except that he seemed sort of interested in the premises I was watchin'."  
 "Couldn't you hold both men?"  
 "No, sir. Mr. Pelham knew some dodges which put me off my balance for a bit. But I must admit he couldn't guess who was at 'im."  
 "Mr. Pelham! Is that your name?"  
 And the inspector looked his astonishment.  
 "Yes. Here is my passport. I arrived in England yesterday from India. You will find that it was stamped at Dover last evening."  
 "Captain Arthur Pelham, late 10th Battalion East Kent Regiment, now attached Indian Army," he read, after a swift glance at the usual caricature of a photograph which adorned the document.  
 "Where do you live in London, sir?" he said, with a pause of dublety more eloquent than speech.  
 "No. 11, Innesmore Mansions, Tottenham Court Road."  
 "And may I ask why you want to see Sir Arthur Pelham's house? Did you mean to call there?"  
 "No. My cousin and I are not on visiting terms. Idle curiosity was my chief motive." And Pelham went on to detail his movements during the afternoon. He could even produce a voucher for admission to Ranelagh.  
 Each minute the inspector was becoming more reassured by the young officer's manner. What he dreaded secretly now was a fuss with the commissioner on account of the policeman's undue zeal.  
 "I'm sorry you should have had all this annoyance, sir," he said. "But you see how it is. Cedar Lodge was the scene of an unsuccessful burglary last night, and Sir Arthur has reason to fear another attempt. Now, you can help the police materially if you are able to supply a workable description of the man who attacked you."  
 "Oh, I had a good look at him for ten seconds or thereabouts," agreed Pelham. "He's a German, though not a typical one, being slight and sinewy, with black eyes and bushy black hair, and a yellow, oval face. I should imagine he hails from what used to be German Poland, round about Kalish or Posen. I guess his age at 35. He wears a small moustache—has rather the air of a foreign journalist. His eyebrows are thick and arched—his lips thin—his teeth even, but discolored by cigarette smoking. His height is somewhat more than my own, say 5 feet 11 inches, and he will weigh 11 stone. He was dressed in—" "Hold on a minute, sir," protested the other. "You've taken my measure all right, but my shorthand is a bit weak. Now I'll just get all that down legibly."  
 The inspector's memory, however, was good, and his written statement contained everything Pelham had said, though he had to ask how to spell Kalish. Then the recital continued:  
 "His jacket suit is dark, probably a deep grey. His shirt is a yellowish cotton, with a soft collar of the same material, and a black tie of thin material, as the knot is very small. A

gold bar pin holds the ends of the tie in position. On his left wrist is a silver watch set in a leather cover. By the way, his wrists are remarkably hairy, and his neck rather scraggy as compared with his face, which is well mottled. His nose is small and straight, and his chin rounded—a handsome sort of chap, I should say, when he smiles. But he didn't smile at me, so I'm only guessing."  
 "By Jingo! I wish you folk who come here to report crimes could guess half as well, sir. Now, two more questions, and I'm done. Have you ever seen this man before?"  
 "Never."  
 "So you have no idea why he should assault you, or try to, as I gather you did the assaulting?"  
 "It seems he must have mistaken me for my cousin, whom I resemble."  
 "That you do, sir, an' no bloomin' mistake, specially after 'e was hit, blurted out the lodge-keeper. The inspector read through his notes again.  
 "You say nothing about his hat or cap," he commented, nibbling the penholder thoughtfully.  
 "No, because he was bare-headed. There was a lump in the breast of pocket of his coat, so he may have stuffed a soft felt hat in there."  
 "Sure as a gun, you're right!" cried the inspector. "Well, thanks to you, sir, we'll know this beauty if we get 'im."  
 "If you secure him within the next day or two you'll find his small nose considerably larger and badly bruised."  
 "That all? Thanks. I'll just light my pipe. Where can I pick up a taxi?"  
 "Pardon me, sir," put in the constable anxiously, "but when you was on the assault, did you say something about breakin' my neck. I'd like to know how that could have been done."  
 "When I turned over on my back, if I had not seen you were, which man, I would have pulled your head and shoulders down, planted both knees in your stomach, and sent you flying in somersault. Never forget that the muscles of the cut are seven times stronger than those of the arm."  
 "That first trick was a bit of all right to you. You've skinned both my shins."  
 "Sorry. I couldn't tell. May I—"  
 "No, sir. Much obliged. But what should I have done?"  
 "I jammed one knee between my legs and tackled me sideways. Then, if I flattened out, push my face into the ground. It's all a matter of leverage."  
 Pelham went out. The inspector nodded to the plain clothes man, who put on a trench mackintosh and cap, and followed swiftly. So, in due course, one taxi stopped at Innesmore Mansions, and the other, which had also come all the way from Mortlake, passed the end of the street.  
 Pelham, examining his clothes in his bedroom, discovered that they were torn, one elbow and both knees having had rough usage.  
 "Dash it," he growled, "that bobby can grow a new skin, but I can't grow a new suit. I thought what is it worth?" And he scrutinized the automatic pistol, concerning which he had said not a word in the police station. It held seven cartridges, of .380 caliber.  
 "It's a thoroughly modern weapon," he mused. "Cost the best part of a quid, I fancy. Well, let's call it quits."  
 Then locking the pistol in a trunk, he had a bath and went to bed. Next morning with Mrs. Smith came the hall-porter to announce that a gentleman, "name of Pridoux," had called about lunch-time the previous day, and said he would look in again at 10 a. m., hoping that Captain Pelham could make it convenient to see him at that hour.  
 For the moment the use of his military title did not puzzle Pelham—it was too familiar in his ears—but the visitor's name was unknown.  
 "What sort of a chap was he—army man?" he inquired.  
 "No, sir, more like a swell jockey or an actor. Near little man, small hands an' small feet, very spry. At first I thort 'e was a Jap."  
 "A Jap?"  
 "Well, sir, it was his funny face, all screwed up an' wrinkled, an' his black eyes—like gimlets, they was. Gemme quite a turn until 'e smiled."  
 Pelham recalled his own phrase to the television inspector, and took thought before he answered.  
 "Right-o," he said. "I'll be around. When Mr. Pridoux arrives bring him up—don't send him up."  
 The "Agony Column" was devoid of personal interest that day. Pelham was deep in an article on the Trans-Indus tribal levies when the bell rang. He unlatched the door, and the hall-porter presented "Mr. Pridoux," of whom he had given a recognizable portrait. The newcomer said:  
 "Captain Pelham? Let me introduce myself," and handed a card, which read: "Mr. C. F. Pridoux, Detective Inspector, Criminal Investigation Department, New Scotland Yard, S. W."  
 "Oh, come in," smiled Pelham, with a nod of thanks to the ex-marine.  
 "You were here yesterday, I understand?" he said, when the two were alone.  
 "So it cannot be anything connected with last night's affair. What's up?"  
 "I really don't know. I want you to tell me."  
 Then a light broke on Pelham.  
 "Great Scott!" he cried. "I can't be about those infernal advertisements!"  
 "But it is."  
 "Well, well. This calls for a smoke. Take a pew. Will you have a cigar or a cigarette? I prefer a pipe."  
 "You must bemuse your brains and poison a young and vigorous frame, stick to a pipe, especially a briar, which is not a briar, but a beath, the bryere of southern France. The disintegrating process will take longer, at any rate."

"I may assume, Mr. Pridoux, you don't disintegrate?"  
 "Not through nicotine."  
 "Do you mind—"  
 "Not at all. I have a respected chief who literally kippers me with the incense of potent Havanas."  
 Pelham filled his pipe leisurely. He was inclined to like Mr. C. F. Pridoux, though it came hard to associate him with the august C. I. D. He was such a frail little man, and so perfectly dressed. His clothes, hat, linen, tie, socks, shoes, were but parts of a harmonious whole. His face, too, was that of a comedian. One could imagine him a member of the Comedie Francaise, and playing Scapin or Taruffe. But, detective! Never. Pelham, therefore, gave a miss in his hank.  
 "I haven't been in England much longer than thirty-six hours," he said, "so feel myself rather out of touch with things. In the circumstances—"  
 "You want to know what right I have to question you, and whether or not I really represent Scotland Yard. I'm glad you're cautious, which is erroneously supposed to be the sole prerogative of the Scotch. Now, I'll clear the ground."  
 Then, to Pelham's growing bewilderment, his visitor reviewed with an almost ridiculous certainty all, or almost all, his movements since he arrived at the Savoy Hotel. No item connected with the visit to the newspaper office or the fray at the gate of Cedar Lodge was missing. To one, hitherto unacquainted with the thoroughgoing methods of the criminal investigation department when intent on any inquiry, the completeness of Pridoux's information was almost uncanny.  
 "And now," said the detective, after reciting the inspector's report, "I want you to explain matters."  
 "Meaning why I joined the advertising stunt?"  
 "Everything."  
 "There's not much to tell. The yarn is perfectly silly."  
 "Yarns generally are silly unless the narrator is an accomplished liar."  
 "Well, you've left me no chance. The only thing you've missed is the strange story of one Jenkins, railway porter at Victoria station. Oh, and one other thing." Pelham rose, went to his bedroom, and returned with the automatic pistol. "Better not handle that unless you are acquainted with such toys. It's full to the bung, and the pull-off may be very light. I haven't tried it, of course."  
 Pridoux took the pistol, and emptied the magazine. Then he snapped the trigger.  
 "Less than four pounds, I should imagine," he said. "Is this Exhibit A?"  
 "Yes, I took it from the gentleman whom I put on the mat in Barnes. It struck me he was going to use it, so I struck him first."  
 "You said nothing about it at the police station?"  
 "No. Why should I?"  
 "Because you are liable to a heavy

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49c Hickory or Dr. Parker's waists, all sizes	37c	15c J. P. Coats' Crochet Cotton, all sizes	11c	3c Ric-Rac Braid, all colors, 1 yard	2c
10c Safety Pins, all sizes, card	7c	65c Sanitary Belts, all sizes	42c	10c Pot Cleaners, at	6c
89c Ironing Board Pads, each	69c	25c Silk Lingerie Sets, shoulder strapping and rosebud pins to match, at	16c	50c Shinola Home Sets	37c
15c J. P. Coats' Crochet Cotton, all sizes	11c	65c Sanitary Belts, all sizes	42c	10c Shinola Shoe Polish, all colors	6c
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